

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000525

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INR/R/MR; IIP/RW; IIP/RNY (FRANK); BBG/VOA; IIP/WEU; AF/PA; EUR/WE (DEBORAH MENNUTI)/P/SP; D/C (MCCOO); EUR/PA (BERBENA); INR/P; INR/EUC; PM; OSC ISA FOR ILN; NEA; WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE; DOC FOR ITA/EUR/FR AND PASS USTR/PA (ANN LUZZATO); USINCEUR FOR PAO; NATO/PA; MOSCOW/PA; ROME/PA; BRUSSELS/PA; USVIENNA FOR USDEL OSCE.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - IRAQ

PARIS - FRIDAY, January 28, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

IRAQ

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

CATHOLIC LA CROIX FEATURES AN OP-ED BY AMBASSADOR LEACH ENTITLED "DEMOCRACY AND COURAGE IN IRAQ" PRAISING THE COURAGE OF IRAQIS WHO WILL VOTE ON SUNDAY TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY IN THEIR COUNTRY: "THE IRAQI PEOPLE WILL DEMONSTRATE THEIR COURAGE TO MOVE FORWARD AND CAST THEIR BALLOTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC IRAQ. WE SHOULD SUPPORT THEIR EFFORTS AND HONOR THEIR RESOLVE IN MAKING THIS TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY." AMBASSADOR LEACH'S VIEWPOINT IS SHARED BY IVAN RIOUFOL IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO. (SEE PART C)

MANY FRONT PAGES ARE DEVOTED TO IRAQ AND THE SECURITY SITUATION ON THE EVE OF THE FIRST IRAQI DEMOCRATIC ELECTION. RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO HEADLINES "ZARQAWI, THE MAN CHALLENGING DEMOCRACY IN IRAQ." POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR TITLES "ZARQAWI, THE NEW BIN LADEN HAUNTING AMERICA." CATHOLIC LA CROIX LEADS WITH "THE IRAQIS, BETWEEN BOMBS AND BALLOTS" WHILE EDITORIALIST BRUNO FRAPPAT URGES EVERYONE TO SHARE WITH THE AMERICANS "A WAGER WHICH CARRIES NO CERTAINTIES BUT WHICH MUST BE SUPPORTED WITHOUT HESITATION." COMMUNIST L'HUMANITE HEADLINES "IRAQ: BLOOD ON THE BALLOTS." RIGHT-OF-CENTER ECONOMIC LES ECHOS TITLES "IRAQ'S ELECTIONS IN A CLIMATE OF EXTREME VIOLENCE." FOR LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION, "THERE IS A SACRED UNION IN IRAQI KURDISTAN, WHERE THERE ARE NO SKIRMISHES, INCLUDING IN THE VOTING CENTERS." (SEE PART C)

RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO CARRIES AN OP-ED BY POLITICAL EXPERT ZAKI LAIDI TITLED "IRAQ AND THE NESCAFE DEMOCRACY." LAIDI EXPLAINS WHY 'INSTANT' DEMOCRACY CANNOT BE EXPORTED ANYWHERE, AS THE AMERICANS BELIEVE: "AMERICA'S POLITICAL ATTITUDE IS BASED ON A SIMPLISTIC BELIEF: DEMOCRACY IS A UNIVERSAL ASSET WHICH TRANSCENDS CULTURE AND HISTORY, ITS IMPLEMENTATION BEING A MATTER OF WILL. IN THIS LIGHT DEMOCRACY IS A VALUE WITHOUT A PAST WHICH IS CONSIDERED AS THE OPPOSITE OF TYRANNY. BUT TO IMPLEMENT DEMOCRACY, THREE THINGS ARE NEEDED: FITTING DEMOCRACY TO THE HOST NATION; A SOCIAL CLASS OF IMPORTERS (OF DEMOCRACY) WHOSE INTEREST IT IS TO PROMOTE A PLURALISTIC APPROACH; A WORLDWIDE CLIMATE THAN CAN ACCOMPANY SUCH A MUTATION THROUGH SUPPORT RATHER THAN THREAT. THIS IS WHY NO IRAQI REGIME HAS THE HOPE OF BEING SOVEREIGN ITS SOLE DEFINITION LIES IN CONFORMING TO AMERICAN POLICY. DEMOCRACY REQUIRES A NATIONAL PROJECT."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

IRAQ

"HOPE IN IRAQ"

IVAN RIOUFOL IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (01/29): "THERE ARE STILL THOSE WHO REVEL IN THE FACT THAT THE AMERICANS ARE FACING DIFFICULTIES IN IRAQ, REAPING WHAT THEY HAVE SOWN. BUT IN TRUTH A MAJORITY OF THE IRAQIS WANT AND HOPE FOR DEMOCRACY. THE ATTACKS ARE ESSENTIALLY BY IRAQIS AGAINST THE IRAQIS THEMSELVES. THOSE WHO WANT TO VOTE WILL NEED MUCH COURAGE. DE GAULLE ONCE SAID THAT IT IS WHEN FACING DANGER THAT WE MUST STAND ERECT. THIS IS WHAT THE AMERICANS AND THE BRITISH ARE DOING IN IRAQ, WHERE THEY ARE DEALING, ALONG WITH THEIR ALLIES, WITH 'NAZISLAMISM,' THIS NEW ENEMY OF MODERATE ISLAM AND THE WEST."

"A WAGER TO BE SHARED"

BRUNO FRAPPAT IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (01/29): "EVEN IF DEMOCRACY COMES TO IRAQ IN A SOMEWHAT SHAKY MANNER, NO ONE SHOULD CRITICIZE THE PROCESS. DEMOCRACY, WHICH IS IN ITSELF IMPERFECT, WILL BE EVEN MORE SO WHEN AT ITS BIRTH IT IS ACCOMPANIED BY VIOLENCE, TERROR, INTIMIDATION AND DEATH THREATS. 'FREEDOM' IS ALSO AMBIGUOUS, WHEN IT IS THE RESULT OF A FOREIGN INTERVENTION DECIDED UNILATERALLY, WITHOUT UNIVERSAL LEGITIMACY. NEVERTHELESS, THIS HAVING BEEN SAID, HOW CAN WE NOT HOPE FOR THESE ELECTIONS TO HAVE AT LEAST THE PREMISES OF DEMOCRACY? . IRAQ'S DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS WOULD CARRY MORE

WEIGHT AND LEGITIMACY IF IT COULD HAVE BEEN THE RESULT OF A UNANIMOUS AGREEMENT BETWEEN NATIONS, WITHOUT HUMILIATING IRAQ, OR DIVIDING ITS PEOPLE. IT IS NOW TOO LATE FOR ALL THAT. WE MUST LOOK TO IRAQ'S FUTURE AND THAT OF AN ENTIRE REGION. AMERICA'S WAGER ON JANUARY 30TH CAN BE NOTHING ELSE THAN A SHARED WAGER. A WAGER WITHOUT CERTAINTY, WITHOUT EXCESSIVE JOY, BUT WITHOUT HESITATION."

"HINDERED SOVEREIGNTY"

PIERRE LAURENT IN COMMUNIST L'HUMANITE (01/29): "IRAQ NEEDS DEMOCRACY AND FREE ELECTIONS WITHOUT FOREIGN OCCUPATION. AMERICA'S WAR CAN ONLY BRING IRAQ ELECTIONS SMEARED WITH BLOOD."

"THE MAN CHALLENGING DEMOCRACY IN IRAQ"

ARNAUD DE LA GRANGE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (01/29): "ONE MAN HAS PROMISED TO MAKE THE ELECTIONS IN IRAQ FAIL THIS SUNDAY, BY PLUNGING THE COUNTRY INTO EVEN MORE CHAOS. SOME BELIEVE THAT ZARQAWI'S REPUTATION HAS SURPASSED THE MAN HIMSELF. REALITY IS SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE, BETWEEN FACTS AND FANTASY. HE IS A FERVENT ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST WHO HAS BEEN TURNED INTO A MYTH BY HIS OWN ADVERSARY, THUS GRANTING HIM INCREDIBLE STATURE. THE MAN IS SAID TO HAVE GREAT OPERATIONAL TALENTS, BUT NOT MUCH IDEOLOGY, AND EVEN LESS SPIRITUALITY. HIS ONLY STRATEGY IS CHAOS." LEACH